

# Turn Your Schoolyard into a Clean Air Zone

From Fort Kent to Portland, school districts are being proactive in reducing air pollution at our schools by establishing Clean Air Zones and asking drivers to shut off their engines in the school yard. Exposure to vehicle exhaust from school buses, cars and trucks can pose health risks. Particles in exhaust can trigger asthma and aggravate respiratory ailments. Children are especially sensitive to air pollution, so the effort to reduce pollution in the school yard is important to all of us.

With a grant from Maine DEP, school districts across the state are installing new signs asking all drivers not to idle in the school yard when dropping off or picking up students.



If you think there's a good reason to idle a school bus, check out the following idling myths:

**Idling Myth No. 1:** It's better for an engine to run at low speed (idling) than to run at regular speed.

**Fact:** Running an engine at low speed causes twice the wear on internal parts as driving at regular speeds.

**Idling Myth No. 2:** It's important to warm up the engine with a long idle period, especially in cold weather.

**Fact:** School bus engines do not need to idle more than a few minutes to warm up. Engine manufacturers generally recommend no more than three to five minutes of idling.

**Idling Myth No. 3:** Shutting off and restarting is hard on the engine and uses more fuel.

**Fact:** Frequent restarting has little impact on engine components. More than 10 seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.



**Idling Myth No. 4:** Idling is necessary to keep the cabin comfortable.

**Fact:** Many buses maintain a comfortable interior temperature for a while without idling. Fuel-Operated Heaters can be used to warm engines and passenger compartments. Each block pre-heater uses only half a cup of diesel per hour compared to half a gallon or more per hour while idling. These heaters run off diesel fuel or electric outlets and include a programmable timer to automatically start or stop the heating function. Benefits of these heaters are fuel savings, lower emissions, longer oil life, and less wear-and-tear on the engine.

**Idling Myth No. 5:** The engine must be kept running in order to operate the school bus safety equipment, such as the flashing lights or stop signal arm.

**Fact:** Safety equipment can be operated as needed without the engine running, with no ill effects on the electrical system of the bus. This does not apply, however, to school buses that use air-operated equipment such as doors, crossing control arms, and other features, where the air supply will not last as long.